

2007 ALTA CONFERENCE



THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Achieving International Excellence

'Law and Public Policy: Taming the Unruly Horse?'

The University of Western Australia

Perth, Australia

23- 26 September 2007

Conference Recap

The 2007 ALTA conference was hosted by the University of Western Australia over 3 and half days from 23 to 26 September 2007. The conference was held at the University Club of Western Australia located on the banks of the beautiful Swan River. The conference was attended by over 150 people.

The theme for the 2007 ALTA Conference was “Law and Public Polic: Taming the Unruly Horse”. This theme was chosen to give an opportunity for Law teachers and other legal professionals (including librarians, administrators, publishers, practitioners, and policy makers) to

gather together and consider the role of the law as an instrument of public policy. This theme was well received by the keynote speakers and presenters, many of whom developed their papers around the conference theme.

The conference was opened on Monday morning by the Honourable Jim McGinty, the Attorney General for Western Australia, with a short, open and insightful comment on the role of the Attorney General. The Honourable Robert French, judge of the Federal Court of Australia, delivered the first plenary paper entitled “Dolores Umbridge and the Concept of Policy as Legal Magic”. The other plenary speakers were: Professor Julian Disney, Director of the Social Justice Project at UNSW; Emeritus Professor David Weisbrot AM, President of the Australian Law Reform Commission; and Professor Carol Harlow QC FBA, a professor in Law at the London School of Economics. The plenary papers were all excellent with each paper developing the conference theme in a different way: Professor Disney’s paper focused on housing affordability; Professor Weisbrot’s paper dealt with public policy and law reform and Professor Harlow considered law and social policy in an age of globalisation.

There were five concurrent interest group sessions spread over the 3 and a half days of the conference and as usual these were very lively, sociable and thought provoking sessions. In all there were approximately 130 papers presented. Special thanks must go to the presenters and also to the interest group convenors, who had the task of running the individual sessions.

The conference commenced on Sunday evening with drinks at the UWA Watersports Complex overlooking the Swan River. The next evening we all met for dinner at Fraser’s restaurant in Kings Park with views over the river and Perth city. On Tuesday evening we travelled to the port city of Fremantle and enjoyed pre-dinner drinks at Notre Dame University in one of the beautiful old buildings that make up the university campus followed by dinner at the Mussel Bar restaurant at the Fremantle Boat Harbour.

Finally we must thank the sponsors – Lexis Nexis, CCH, Oxford University Press, Routledge-Cavendish, Pearson, Thomson, Co-op Bookshop, Blackwell and Cambridge.

The 63rd annual ALTA Conference will be held at James Cook University, at their Cairns Campus, from the 6-9th July 2008. The theme for the conference is “The Law, the Environment, Indigenous Peoples: Climate for Change?”

We wish JCU every success with the conference and look forward to catching up with our friends and colleagues in Cairns in July 2008.

2007 ALTA Conference Committee
School of Law, University of Western Australia